

## Minutes of Colorado Canyons Citizens Advisory Council Dec. 4, 2003

The meeting in the Mesa County Courthouse was called to order at 3:10 p.m. by Chairman Warren Gore.

Present were CCCAC members Warren Gore, John Foster, Art Donoho, Ken Curry, Joe Keyes, Doralyn Genova and Bob Silbernagel.

Also present were Colorado Canyons NCA Manager Greg Gnesios and Gene Arnesen of the NCA staff. Members of the public included George Rossman of Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell's staff, Bennett Boeschstein of the city of Fruita, and later Dick Pierce, an interested party.

### **Manager's Report:**

Greg Gnesios presented the new, full-color brochure for the NCA, which is due to be out to the public by the end of the year. 8,000 copies are to be printed initially. Greg also said that rack cards describing the NCA are being made up for hotels and motels in the area, and a new kiosk is being developed for the family-use motorized track area at Rabbit Valley.

The public lands center, which will provide information on the NCA and other BLM lands, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service and Colorado State Parks is expected to be open in its interim location in the Fruita Welcome Center by March. Representatives of the various agencies are still looking for a permanent site for the center.

Although the November field trip of the CAC was canceled, Greg hopes the council can schedule other trips for this coming winter and spring. Members of the Northwest Region Resource Advisory Council had a successful field trip to the Split Rock area in the NCA, and viewed some of the area's paleontological resources.

The public comment period is open on the draft management plan for the NCA, and so far, according to Greg, "We are underwhelmed with comments." The comment period runs through Jan. 30. The BLM is planning an open house in the second or third week in January, with members of the CAC attending.

The legislation creating the NCA calls for the advisory council's charter to be renewed every two years, and it is due to be renewed now. BLM officials in Washington suggested it would be an appropriate time to make any changes the CAC feels are necessary. One possible change, Greg suggested, was a provision to replace members who resign or who fail to show up to meetings on a regular basis.

Warren Gore suggested that the advisory council ought to have a chance to review public comments on the draft plan prior to its Feb. 4 scheduled meeting. He also said that meeting might be a good time to select a new chairman, since Warren is interested in stepping down as chairman, and to discuss the charter. The council also agreed that a meeting is needed in March, as well, to discuss volunteer efforts with members of the working groups.

**Budget:**

For the fiscal year that began on Oct. 1, Greg said there was “a brief period of limited euphoria when we thought we would have enough money.” However, a new initiative in Montana called “Undaunted Stewardship” dealing with the Lewis and Clark expedition took \$1 million from BLM conservation areas nationwide. Colorado Canyons NCA had to contribute \$145,000 from its current year budget. According to Gene Arneson, that still leaves the NCA with \$855,000 in the current budget, slightly more than the minimum of \$750,000 needed to get by. But the problem will come in future years because the money for the Montana initiative was taken out of Colorado Canyons’ base funding, and the area may not have the flex funding it has had the past couple of years. “Next year, if we just get base funding, we’ll only have \$381,000,” Gene said. “That doesn’t even cover our salaries.”

**Special Presentation:**

Chris Barnes, the BLM representative to the multi-agency Arthur Carhart Wilderness Training Center in Missoula, Mont., and Eric Finstick with the BLM in Denver, discussed wilderness in the NCA. Chris was in Colorado offering training on wilderness issues to BLM staff here. Barnes said the BLM and CAC face several challenges in dealing with the wilderness in the NCA. First is determining what the desired conditions for the wilderness are, and whether they exist today. Second is determining what the standards are for measuring those conditions, such as how many encounters with other people are acceptable. Third is figuring out what actions are to be taken if the desired conditions are exceeded. Those actions can range from very limited, such as increasing public education, to highly intrusive, such as posting rangers at the entrance to the wilderness, limiting public access and requiring backcountry permits. All such actions are conducted under a program called “The Limits of Acceptable Change,” which was developed in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area in Montana.

Doralyn Genova said that in order to implement such measures, it would take a good deal of money. Barnes said it would take not only money but the expenditure of political capital as well. “We’ll never have enough money or people to implement restrictions that the members of the public, in their hearts don’t believe are right,” he said.

**Public Comment:**

Bennett Boeschstein re-iterated the City of Fruita’s commitment to continuing to partner with the BLM in the NCA particularly in regard to the Public Lands Information Center which is being developed and in the co-management of the Snooks Bottom area adjacent to the NCA.

Dick Pierce, a retired college biology professor with an interest in paleontology said he liked Alternative 3 in the draft management plan because of its flexible approach to managing the ecology. However, he was worried that it could make continuing research and access to new paleontologic resources difficult. He also said the reference to single-handed tools did not seem to make sense for professional research. John Foster and other members of the CAC said that restriction was only supposed to apply to hobby collection of nonvertebrate fossils. However, Greg said new rules handed down from Washington prohibit any hobby collecting of fossils in NCAs, including invertebrates. Therefore, the reference to single-handed tools may be moot and should be eliminated from the draft plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:  
Bob Silbernagel

